



United States Department of the Interior
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Owyhee Field Office
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DECISION

ABANDONED MINE LAND (AML) CLOSURES

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) proposes to close 17 abandoned mine openings within the Owyhee Field Office area (see Attachment 1 for site name, number and closure type), Owyhee County, Idaho. All such openings are considered abandoned unless specifically addressed by a surface management notice or plan of operations with an appropriate financial guarantee, regardless of the presence of a mining claim. However, only the outer (entrance) areas of the openings would be closed. Therefore, essentially all underground workings would remain available for future exploration and development.

The openings would be closed by either backfilling (typically with waste rock that was sidecast below the openings during mining); plugging with polyurethane foam (PUF); or installation of a bat grate, bat grate-culvert, or bat gate. The PUF closures would be covered by approximately 18 inches of dirt and rock. The type of closure would depend on the type of opening, the stability of an opening, and wildlife habitat within the workings.

The closure work may include the use of trackhoes, backhoes, bulldozers, mini-excavators, support pick-ups, ATVs, etc. Work would occur only on previously disturbed ground, and typically would take one day per opening. Welding of bat closures would occur at some sites, but in areas free from vegetation to prevent wildfire. Wildfire prevention measures also would include having multiple fire extinguishers readily available during site work.

No waste rock piles with deleterious elements or the potential for acid rock drainage would be disturbed under the proposed action. Sedimentation and erosion control structures would be used as appropriate to ensure that no meaningful amounts of sediment loss occur at the sites. In addition, the flow of water at any site, including adit drainage, would not be altered under the proposed action. The sites would be posted as appropriate with abandoned mine lands warning signs.

CONFORMANCE with LAND USE PLAN, OTHER PLANS AND POLICIES:

The Proposed Action is in conformance with the current Owyhee Resource Management Plan (ORMP) (December 30, 1999). Although it is not specifically provided for, it is consistent with other goals and objectives found in the Resource Management Plan, specifically as it relates to Hazardous Materials (pf 46 – 47 of the ORMP).

The Proposed Action is also consistent with Federal and State laws including BLM policies, manuals, and handbooks. The Proposed Action is consistent with the Abandoned Mine Lands Program Policy (Manual Section 3720). Under the policy abandoned mine sites may be closed or remediated to protect human health and the environment.

DECISION RECORD AND RATIONALE:

The decision to be made is whether or not the described mine closure procedures are within the intent of the CX described in BLM 516 DM 11.9 J (8) and no extraordinary circumstances exist that would require further NEPA analysis.

An objective of the AML program is to protect public safety and reduce liabilities by eliminating or reducing hazards posed by abandoned mines. The locations of these old workings are within Silver City, Idaho and on War Eagle Mountain; they are readily accessible to the curious public. Focus areas are consistent with the priorities established in the BLM Cooperative Conservation Based Strategic Plan for the Abandoned Mine Lands Program, March 2006.

The proposed action clearly attempts to achieve the AML program objective without triggering any of the listed extraordinary circumstances. Therefore, it is my decision to authorize the closure of the AML sites identified in Attachment 1 of this document.

AUTHORITY:

The primary authorities under which this decision is being issued include the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA), National Oil and Hazardous Substances Pollution Contingency Plan (NCP) (40 Code of Federal Regulations 300), Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) (42 United States Code 9601), and Watershed Restoration and Enhancement Agreements ("Wyden Amendment") (Public Law 104-208, Sec. 124, Public Law 105-277, Sec. 136 of the 1999 Interior Appropriations Act of 1988).

APPEALS INFORMATION:

Appeals information can be found at 43 CFR 4.410.

/s/ Michele McDaniel

Michele McDaniel
Acting Field Manager, Owyhee Field Office

August 8, 2014
Date